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SUMMERING IN THE SIERRA.

The Summit of South Dome—Yosemite Tourists—An Irrepressible Mountain Climber.

[FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.]

YOSEMITE VALLEY, August 28, 1876.

SOUTH DOME.

This forenoon I had the pleasure of meeting George Anderson, the indomitable cragsman, the brave climber, of firm nerve and eye, who was the first to set foot on the great South Dome. He has been hard at work all summer hewing timber for a stairway up the hitherto inaccessible curving summit of the dome, which he hopes to have completed by the first of June next, so as to be available for the main flood of next year's travel. It will be about 800 feet in length, with about a thousand steps, securely railed in on both sides. The side timbers will be eight inches wide by four in thickness, and firmly bolted on the solid rock. And, inasmuch as the general slope of the rock on which the stairway will be laid is only about equal to that of ordinary house stairs, there will be nothing dangerous in the ascent, nor anything of a clinging, clambering character. When, however, we take into consideration the fact that the few low little steps leading to the upper stories of hotels are regarded as so exhausting as to require the modern cage elevator, the grand old dome will seem about as inaccessible to most people as before. But this is altogether a mistake, for such a getting up stairs in the midst of these glorious landscapes, with one's veins filled with mountain ether, is a very different affair from the dead work of house-climbing. You feel the rush and thrill of wild vitality in every fibre, nervous currents are set free, all sense of gravitation vanishes as if by magic, and you are borne aloft without an effort. The Dome is without exception the noblest and most impressive rock in the entire Sierra—a structure of one stone a mile high, hewn by long centuries of glacial action out of the solid flank of the ranges. There seems absolutely nothing in sky or tree or flower, or even in the down-pouring light, to soften its stern enduring rockiness. Nevertheless, the flinty granite flows from its shoulders like delicate floating drapery, pictured with living plants, and exquisitely fluted and penciled by the delicate fingering of innumerable rills. But infinitely more impressive than all this eternal grandeur and beauty are the spiritual beams that seem to emanate from every pore, as if it were an individual living being possessed of a soul.

GODDESS OF THE VALLEY.

The Indian calls it Tissiack, which some one with inconceivable freedom has rendered "Goddess of the Valley." But without stopping to inquire into the character of a Digger goddess, I only want to remark here, that standing on their head is not the best position from which to see anybody, still I would advise every one to make the ascent of Tissiack, for not to mention the glorious circumference of landscapes seen from its summit, the joyous leafy valley outspread a mile below, and far beyond, alp, and forest, and rolling granite seas. On these vast ærial thrones one always receives lasting impressions of an utter isolation from all the known ways of the world, leaving the soul free to expand and blend with fountain nature, as if one had died and gone to another star.

There are three toll carriage roads leading into the valley, and three toll trails and one toll carriage road in it, along which tourists are tolled and trailed like dead river gravel in a sluice tunnel, to divorce them from their gold. On the incoming roads the yield per head from toll alone is a dollar. On the Mirror Lake road, fifty cents; on the Yosemite Fall trail, fifty cents; on the Nevada Fall, seventy-five cents, and on the Glacier Point, a dollar. Anderson's toll steps on Tissiack will be the next improvement of this class. It is often urged that the expenditure of a few thousand dollars by the State would remove these irritating charges from all the valley ways. But these are beyond the concern of the genuine traveler, for he will avoid beaten paths as the only dead lines in the landscape, and wade freely away among the leaves and flowers.

In this connection I might note the rapid subsidence of the natural beauty belonging to the green garden floor of the valley beneath the march of commonplace improvement. Stupid fences grope their way here and there along the levels, breaking every natural law within reach. Most of the arable ground is semi-cultivated. There is also a growth of two stores, two butcher-shops, a laundry, livery-stable, saloon and curiosity shop; a post, express and telegraph office, hotel accommodations for two hundred guests, and a school attended by fourteen or fifteen scholars. These bright, handsome, kissable scholars tripping gaily adown the valley with their books, are the only fruits of civilization here that pleases me. A jail, hospital and church are still wanting; though sermons may occasionally be heard in the hotel parlors from the few extra devout or extra irreverent men who dare to preach in the presence of Tutocahunla and Tissiack.

As civilisation rolls Yosemiteward there is a marked falling off in the quality of tourists. The first comers endured what to them were real dangers and hardships for the very love of wild nature alone, passing their nights beneath the forest trees or rude cabin roofs, fording unbridged torrents and riding over rugged trails, to worship in the grandest of mountain temples, or at least to seek adventures in a spirit that always predicates something higher. Now the mere doing of Yosemite is becoming the regular thing with all sight-seeing lovers of perpetual motion, whatsoever their tastes, provided only they carry the qualification of dollars.

To listen to their conversation here, mere scrubby bits of wayside gossip, one could not infer there was a flower, a pine tree, or mountain within a thousand miles, always however with refreshing exceptions.

A PERSISTENT MOUNTAIN CLIMBER.

A firm, condensed, muscular little man of my acquaintance comes a climbing in the mountains every year. His love of alpine exercise seems to suffer no abatement, notwithstanding he scrambles most of the year among the dangerous heights and hollows of the San Francisco stock market and among the arithmetical banks and braes of banking. He is a short man, or even shorter, who, disdaining the plush lawns and gravelly margins of Yosemite, pushes bravely out among the precipices of the loftiest Alps; scaling cliffs for the dear love of the danger, glissading adown glacier declivities and floundering through snow fountains with indomitable perseverance, yet without any of the distinctive characteristics of the cautious mountaineer. Mounts Shasta, Whitney, Lyell, Dana and the Obelisk, all have felt his foot; and years ago he made desperate efforts to ascend the South Dome, eager for the first honors, and certainly no one could be better qualified to succeed in a chance way; for with the grip and audacity of a squirrel, his tense, muscular limb bundles ply with a pattering, twinkling motion, seemingly independent of ordinary holds. The only kinds of mountain climbing in which he appears at disadvantage are flood and earthquake taluses. The various blocks and boulders of which they are composed are all placed by natural laws in exquisite rhythmical order, and the tuned mountaineer, bounding adown their curves, finds himself playing upon a grand instrument. But here Mr. Short finds difficulty and discord in pattering from key to key, like a lady with stumpy, abbreviated fingers, playing a piano. Upon plain flowing folds of granite, however, the case is different, and happily our hero has at length found what he long has sought—an accessible mountain, with name and fame deemed inaccessible, and that mountain is Starr King, the loftiest and most symmetrical of the Yosemite Domes. Returning the other day from an extended excursion into the high Sierra, he determined an attempt upon it from the north, and now the silk handkerchief of a brave young lawyer who accompanied him, floats above it on the breeze, proclaiming the small fact, that with the exception of a few branches of spirey needles, the last of Yosemite inaccessibles has been conquered. To Anderson belongs the honor of first standing in the blue ether above Tissiack; and to the dauntless San Francisco Short belongs the first footprint on the crown of Starr King.

WARM WEATHER.

The last ripe cluster of Yosemite days had an exceptionally high temperature—from 80 to 90 degrees in the coolest spots. But amid our broad breezy currents and pine and rock shadows, nothing very oppressive was experienced even by the most limp and languid. The sky is cool now; the falls are sounding their finest harmonies; the snow-bound Alps are at length open and approachable, and to the devout traveler all things invite.

JOHN MUIR.